



## **HOUSING FOCUS GROUP**

**Tuesday, May 28, 2013 | 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm**

**Mansfield Community Center Community Room**

**Minutes**

*Present- Rebecca Fields, Kathy Ward, Jill Coghlan, Neil Facchinetti, Kaishuang Cao, Don Hoyle, Ric Hossack, Betty Wassmundt, Lida Bilokur, Terry Cook. Consultant: Larissa Brown, Goody Clancy Staff: Linda Painter, Jennifer Kaufman*

- I. Introductions** – Kaufman opened the meeting at 6:34 p.m. After member introductions, Kaufman asked if there were any changes or corrections to the minutes of the last meeting. Coghlan requested that the spelling of her name be corrected. No other changes or corrections to the minutes were noted.
- II. Review and discussion of estimated future housing needs** – Members received a draft Housing Strategy Report containing growth projections and possible strategies to address goals discussed at the previous meeting. Brown reviewed the projected population for 2025 and estimated number of housing units that would be needed to accommodate that population. Members provided feedback on the assumptions used to generate the projections, including a request that the percentage of potential population growth attributed to student households be reevaluated and questioned how births/deaths are accounted for in the projections.
- III. Review and discussion of housing types and best practices** – This item was not discussed.
- IV. Review and discussion of Planned Development Areas as areas to meet future housing needs** – As part of her presentation, Brown displayed maps of the Planned Development Areas identified in the 2006 Plan of Conservation and Development as being potentially suitable for higher density housing. Goody Clancy is in the process of developing concept plans for these areas that will be displayed at the upcoming Community Open House. Members discussed several locations where additional housing units could be accommodated. Fields requested that Holinko Estates be added to the list of potential locations, noting that an expansion and redevelopment of the property could have multiple affordability levels instead of being limited to moderate income residents as it is currently.
- V. Discussion and identification of housing goals and strategies** – Members broke into two groups to discuss the draft strategies identified in the handout and to specifically address the type of rural character that should be preserved. Feedback from the two groups included the following:

- *Rural Character to Be Preserved.* The following features were identified as important to preservation of the Town's rural character:
  - Scenic vistas, in particular those provided by farmland. Members encouraged preservation of working farms, particularly large tracts of land that are privately held. It was also noted that agricultural activities need to be conducted in a manner that also preserves aquifers through limited use of pesticides and fertilizers.
  - Scenic roads – more protection is needed for character of scenic roads, to include development along the road, not just the road itself.
  - UConn Forest and Farmland – the town should encourage UConn to preserve its forests and farmland as they contribute significantly to the town's rural character
  - Historic spots
  - Hiking Trails
- *Draft Strategies.*
  - Members discussed the pros and cons of 2-acre zoning, such as being able to have a home with space and separation from neighbors, but acknowledged that this approach can result in much more land being developed and a more suburban character
  - There was general support for approaches such as cluster development and Natural Resource Protection Zoning to maximize the amount of open space that can be preserved. Members noted that future higher density housing/mixed use projects should be a lower scale than Storrs Center and be designed to be less urban, with lower building heights and larger setbacks.
  - Both groups identified the need to better address housing affordability, both for families and seniors. One potential strategy identified by members for creating more affordable senior housing was adjustments to the Town's tax policy related to tax relief for seniors and the disabled, pursuant to State Statutes. While the qualifying income listed in the statutes is very low, the Town has the ability to establish higher income limits, thereby increasing the number of seniors that would qualify.
  - Members noted that there should be strategies added related to sustainable energy for new housing.

**VI. Public Comment** – There were no public comments.

**VII. Next steps and Adjourn** – Brown requested that members forward comments on the draft strategies to [mansfieldtomorrow@mansfieldct.org](mailto:mansfieldtomorrow@mansfieldct.org). Members were reminded of the upcoming Community Open House scheduled for June 18<sup>th</sup> at the Buchanan Center from 4 pm to 9 pm. The next meeting date for the focus group has not yet been scheduled.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:35 p.m.